

The Story of the Three Burglars—Continued from last week.

"I was slowly, for the tide was just beginning to turn, and when we got to the house I mentioned I noticed that there was now no light in it. When we were about opposite to it I suddenly looked up and said, not speaking very loud: 'By George! if that isn't Williamson Green's house. I wasn't thinkin' of it when we rowed up, and passed it without taking notice of it. I am sorry for that, for I wanted to see Williamson, and now I expect he has gone to bed.'

"Who is Mr. Green?" I asked.
 "He's an old friend of mine," said my father, "and I haven't seen him for some little while now. About four months ago he borrowed of me a sextant, quadrant and chronometer. They were instruments I took from old Captain Barney in payment of some work I did for him. I wasn't usin' them, and Williamson had bought a cat-boat and was studying navigation, but he has given up that fad now and has promised me over and over to send me back my instruments, but he has never done it. If I'd thought of it I would have stopped and got 'em of him, but I didn't think, and now I expect he has gone to bed. However, I'll row in shore and see; perhaps he's up yet."

"You see, ma'am," said the speaker to my wife, "I'm tellin' you all these particulars because I am very anxious you should understand exactly how every thing happened on this night which was the turning-point of my life."
 "Very good," said Aunt Martha, "we want to hear all the particulars."

"Well, then," continued the burglar, "we pulled up to a stone wall which was at the bottom of Green's place and made fast, and father he got out and went up to the house. After a good while he came back and said that he was pretty sure Williamson Green had gone to bed, and as it wouldn't do to waken people up from their sleep to ask them for nautical instruments they had borrowed, he sat down for a minute on the top of the wall and then he slapped his knee, not making much noise, though."

"By George," he said, "an idea has just struck me. I can play the prettiest trick on Williamson that ever was played on mortal man. Those instruments are all in a box locked up and I know just where he keeps it. I saw it not long ago, when I went to his house to talk about a yacht he wants built. They are on a table in the corner of his bed-room. He was taking me through the house to show me the improvements he had made, and he said to me:

"Martin, there's your instruments, I won't trouble you to take them with you, because they're heavy, and you're not going straight home, but I'll bring them to you day after to-morrow, when I shall be goin' your way."

"Now, then," said my father, "the trick I'm thinkin' of playing on Williamson is this: I'd like to take that box of instruments out of his room without his knowing it and carry them home, having the boat here convenient; and then in a day or two to write to him and tell him I must have 'em, because I have a special use for them. Of course, he'll be awfully cut up, not having them to send back, and when he comes down to my place to talk about it, and after hearing all he has to say, I'll show him the box. He'll be the most dumfounded man in this State, and if I don't choose to tell him he'll never know to his dying day how I got that box. And if he lies awake at night, trying to think how I got it, it will serve him right for keeping my property from me so long."

"But, father," said I, "if the people have gone to bed you can't get into the house to play him your trick."

"That can be managed," says he. "I'm rather old for climbing myself, but I know a way by which you, Thomas, can get in easy enough. At the back of the house is a trellis with a grape-vine running over it, and the top of it is just under one of the second-story windows. You can climb up that trellis, Thomas, and lift up that window-sash, very carefully, so's not to make no noise, and get in, then you'll be in a back room with a door right in front of you which opens into Mr. and Mrs. Green's bed-room. There's always a little night lamp burning in it, by which you can see to get about. In the corner, on your right as you go into the room, is a table with my instrument-box standing on it. The box is pretty heavy and there is a handle on top to carry it by. You needn't be afraid to go in, for by this time they are both sound asleep and you can pick up the box and walk out as gingerly as a cat, havin', of course, taken your shoes off before you went in. Then you can hand the box out the back window to me—I can climb up high enough to reach it—and you can scuttle down, and we'll be off, having the best rig on Williamson Green that I ever heard of in my born days."

"I was a very active boy, used to climbing and all that sort of thing, and I had no doubt that I could easily get into the house, but I did not fancy my father's scheme."

"Suppose," I said, "that Mr. Williamson Green should wake up and see me, what could I say? How could I explain my situation?"

"You needn't say any thing," said my father. "If he wakes up blow out the light and soot. If you happen to have the box in your hand drop it out the back window and then slip down after it. He won't see us, but if he does he can not catch us before we get to the boat; but if he should, however, I'll have to explain the matter to him, and the joke will be against me; but I shall get my instruments, which is the main point, after all."

"I did not argue with my father, for he was a man who hated to be differed with, and I agreed to help him carry out his little joke. We both took off our shoes and walked quietly to the back of the house. My father stood below, and I climbed up the trellis under the back window, which he pointed out. The window-sash was down all but a little crack to let in air, and I raised it so slowly and gently that I made no noise. Then, without any trouble at all, I got into the room."

"I found myself in a moderate-sized chamber, into which a faint light came

from a door opposite the window. Having been several hours out in the night my eyes had become so accustomed to the darkness that this light was comparatively strong and I could see every thing."

"Looking about me my eyes fell on a little bedstead, on which lay one of the most beautiful infants I ever beheld in my life. Its golden hair lay in ringlets upon the pillow. Its eyes were closed, but its soft cheeks had in them a rosy tinge which almost equaled the color of its dainty little lips, slightly opened as it softly breathed and dreamed." At this point I saw my wife look quickly at the bed-room key she had in her hand. I knew she was thinking of George Williamson.

"I stood entranced," continued the burglar, "gazing upon this babe, for I was very fond of children, but I remembered that I must not waste time, and stepped softly into the next room. There I beheld Mr. and Mrs. Williamson Green in bed, both fast asleep, the gen-



"I STOOD ENTRANCED."

tleman breathing a little hard. In a corner just where my father told me I should find it, stood the box upon the table.

"But I could not immediately pick it up and depart. The beautiful room in which I found myself was a revelation to me. Until that moment I had not known that I had tastes and sympathies of a higher order than might have been expected of the youthful son of a boat builder. Those artistic furnishings aroused within a love of the beautiful which I did not know I possessed. The carpets, the walls, the pictures, the hangings in the windows, the furniture, the ornaments, every thing in fact impressed me with such a delight that I did not wish to move or go away."

"Into my young soul there came a longing. 'Oh!' I said to myself, 'that my parents had belonged to the same social grade as that worthy couple reposing in that bed, and oh! that I, in my infancy, had been as beautiful and as likely to be so carefully nurtured and cultured as that sweet babe in the next room.' I almost heaved a sigh as I thought of the difference between these surroundings and my own, but I checked myself, it would not do to make a noise and spoil my father's joke."

"There were a great many things in that luxurious apartment which it would have delighted me to look upon and examine, but I forebore."

"I wish I'd been there," said the stout man, "there wouldn't have been any forbearin'."

The speaker turned sharply upon him.
 "Don't you interrupt me again," he said, angrily. Then, instantly resuming his deferential tone, he continued the story.

"But I had come there by the command of my parent and this command must be obeyed without trifling or loss of time. My father did not approve of trifling or loss of time. I moved quietly towards the table in the corner, on which stood my father's box. I was just about to put my hand upon it when I heard a slight movement behind me. I gave a start and glanced backward. It was Mr. Williamson Green turning over in his bed; what if he should awake? His back was now towards me and my impulse was to fly and leave every thing behind me, but my father had ordered me to bring the box, and he expected his orders to be obeyed. I had often been convinced of that."

"I stood perfectly motionless for a minute or so, and when the gentleman recommenced his regular and very audible breathing I felt it safe to proceed with my task. Taking hold of the box I found it was much heavier than I expected it to be, but I moved gently away with it and passed into the back room."

"There I could not refrain from stopping a moment by the side of the sleeping babe, upon whose cherub-like face the light of the night-lamp dimly shone. The little child was still sleeping sweetly, and my impulse was to stop and kiss it, but I knew that this would be wrong. The infant might awake and utter a cry and my father's joke be spoiled. I moved to the open window, and with some trouble and, I think, without any noise, I succeeded in getting out upon the trellis with the box under my arm. The descent was awkward, but my father was a tall man, and, reaching upward, relieved me of my burden before I got to the ground."

"I didn't remember it was so heavy," he whispered, "or I should have given you a rope to lower it down by. If you had dropped it and spoiled my instruments, and made a lot of noise besides, I should have been angry enough."

"I was very glad my father was not angry, and following him over the green sward we quickly reached the boat, where the box was stowed away under the bow to keep it from injury."

"We pushed off as quietly as possible and rowed swiftly down the river. When we had gone about a mile I suddenly dropped my oar with an exclamation of dismay."

"What's the matter?" cried my father.
 "Oh, I have done a dreadful thing," I said. "Oh father, I must go back."

"I am sorry to say that at this my father swore."
 "What do you want to go back for?" he said.

"Just to think of it! I have left open the window in which that beautiful child was sleeping. If it should take cold and die from the damp air of the river blowing upon it I should never forgive myself. Oh! if I had only thought of climbing up the trellis again and pulling down that sash. I am sure I could go back and do it without making the least noise." My father gave a grunt, but what the grunt meant I do not know, and for a few moments he was silent, and then he said:

"Thomas, you can not go back, the distance is too great, the tide is against us, and it is time that you and I are both in our beds. Nothing may happen to that baby, but attend to my words now, if any harm should come to that child it will go hard with you. If it should die it would be of no use for you to talk about practical jokes. You would be held responsible for its death. I was going to say to you that it might be as well for you not to say any thing about this little venture until I had seen how Williamson Green took the joke. Some people get angry with very little reason, although I hardly believe he's that sort of man, but now things are different. He thinks all the world of that child, which is the only one they've got, and if you want to stay outside of jail or the house of refuge I warn you never to say a word of where you have been this night."

"With this he began to row again, and I followed his example, but with a very heavy heart. All that night I dreamt of the little child with the damp night winds blowing in upon it."

"Did you ever hear if it caught cold?" asked Aunt Martha.
 "No," replied the burglar, "I never did. I mentioned the matter to my father, and he said that he had great fears upon the subject, for although he had written to Williamson Green, asking him to return the instruments, he had not seen him or heard from him, and he was afraid that the child had died or was dangerously sick. Shortly after that my father sent me on a little trip to the Long Island coast to collect some bills from people for whom he had done work. He gave me money to stay a week or two at the sea-shore, saying that the change would do me good, and it was while I was away on this delightful holiday that an event occurred which had a most disastrous effect upon my future life. My father was arrested for burglary!"

"It appeared, and I can not tell you how shocked I was when I discovered the truth, that the box which I had carried away did not contain nautical instruments, but was filled with valuable plate and jewels. My unfortunate father heard from a man who had been discharged from the service of the family whose house he had visited—whose name by the way was not Green—where the box containing the valuables mentioned was always placed at night, and he had also received accurate information in regard to the situation of the rooms and the best method of gaining access to them."

"I believe that some arrangement had been made between my father and this discharged servant in regard to a division of the contents of the box, and it was on account of a disagreement upon this subject that the man became very angry, and after pocketing what my father thought was his fair share he departed to unknown regions, leaving behind a note to the police, which led to my father's arrest."

"That was a mean trick," said Aunt Martha.
 The burglar looked at her gratefully.

"In the lower spheres of life, madam, such things often happen. Some of the plate and jewels were found in my

father's possession, and he was speedily tried and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. And now, can you imagine, ladies," said the tall burglar, apparently having become convinced to address himself to Aunt Martha as well as my wife, "the wretched position in which I found myself? I was upbraided as the son of a thief. I soon found myself without home, without occupation, and, alas! without good reputation. I was careful not to mention my voluntary connection with my father's crime for fear that should I do so I might be compelled to make a statement which might increase the severity of his punishment. For this reason I did not dare to make inquiries concerning the child in whom I had taken such an interest and whose life I had, perhaps, jeopardized. I never knew, ladies, whether that infant grew up or not."

"But I, alas! grew up to a life of hardship and degradation. It would be impossible for persons in your sphere of life to understand what I now was obliged to suffer. Suitable employment I could not obtain, because I was the son of a burglar. With a father in the State's prison it was of no use for me to apply for employment at any respectable place of business. I labored at one thing and another, sometimes engaging in the most menial employments. I also had been educated and brought up by my dear mother for a very different career. Sometimes I managed to live fairly well, sometimes I suffered. Always I suffered from the stigma of my father's crime; always in the eyes of the community in which I lived—a community I am sorry to say

incapable as a rule of making correct judgments in delicate cases like these—I was looked upon as belonging to the ranks of the dishonest. It was a hard lot, and sometimes almost impossible to bear up under."

"I have spoken at length, ladies, in order that you may understand my true position, and I wish to say that I have never felt the crushing weight of my father's disgrace more deeply than I felt it last evening. This man," nodding toward the stout burglar "came to me shortly after I had eaten my supper, which happened to be a very frugal one, and said to me:

"Thomas, I have some business to attend to to-night, in which you can help me if you choose. I know you are a good mechanic."
 "If it's work that will pay me," I answered, "I should be very glad to do it. For I am greatly in need of money."

"It will pay," said he, and I agreed to assist him.
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